



SHIRLEY

Middlesex County



[NARRATIVE](#)
[GEOGRAPHY](#)
[GOVERNMENT](#)
[DEMOGRAPHICS](#)
[HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS](#)
[TRANSPORTATION](#)
[CULTURE AND RECREATION](#)
[MISCELLANEOUS](#)



NARRATIVE

Narrative

The Town of Shirley is a rural industrial community located on the lowlands of the Catacoonamaug River. It was considered the frontier when the handful of earliest colonists arrived in 1720 and settled on scattered farms in the town. Grist mills, saw mills and fulling mills were developed after 1739 using the town's available water power supplies. Even after that time, the town was treated as the outlying agricultural and mill area of Groton. As the frontier stabilized however, the number of settlers increased and they turned to agriculture and grazing as their main activities. Townspeople planted fruit bearing trees very early and the managing of orchards along with seasonal lumbering became part of the town's economy. Increasing industrial activity included the first paper mill around 1790 and a small iron works and nail factory about 1810. Within a few years, the town had become a textile producer as the first of seven cotton mills was established in 1812 along the Catacoonamaug. These mills included one developed by Shakers in 1849.

The railroad from Boston on the Fitchburg route opened Shirley to further development in 1845, and additional industries were established in town, including a pitch fork factory, Samson Cordage Company and the C.A. Edgarton Suspender Factory, which by 1890 was the second largest maker of suspenders in the country. The location of the water to power these industries created an industrial village along the narrow valley in which the town is situated and many of the period brick towered mills survive to create an authentic period landscape. The valley is also the site of the expansion of Fort Devens army base in modern times.

(Seal supplied by community. Narrative based on information provided by the Massachusetts Historical Commission)



GEOGRAPHY

Location

Northeastern Massachusetts, bordered by Townsend and Groton on the north, Ayer and Harvard on the east, Lancaster on the south, and Lunenburg on the west. Shirley is located 11 miles east of Fitchburg, 25 miles northeast of Worcester, 39 miles northwest of Boston, and 179 miles from New York City.

Total Area: 15.91 sq. miles

Land Area: 15.83 sq. miles

Population: 6,118

Density: 386 per sq. mile

Climate

(National Climatic Data Center)

(Clinton Station)

Normal temperature in January.....23.4°F

Normal temperature in July.....71.3°F

Normal annual precipitation.....47.0"

U.S.G.S. Topographical Plates

Shirley, Ayer, Townsend

Regional Planning Agency

Montachusett

Metropolitan Statistical Area

(1993 Definition)

Boston



GOVERNMENT

Municipal Offices

Main Number: (978) 425-4331

[Telephone Numbers for Public Information](#)

Form of Government

Board of Selectmen
Executive Secretary
Open Town Meeting

Year Incorporated

As a town: 1786

Registered Voters (Secretary of State 1994)

	Number	%	
Total Registered	2,679		
Democrats	554	20.7	%
Republicans	340	12.7	%
Other parties	1	0.0	%
Unenrolled Voters	1,784	66.6	%

Legislators

[Senators and Representatives by City and Town](#)



DEMOGRAPHICS

Table DP-1. Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000

Geographic Area: Shirley town, Middlesex County, Massachusetts

[For information on confidentiality protection, nonsampling error, and definitions, see text]

Subject	Number	Percent	Subject	Number	Percent
Total population.....	6,373	100.0	HISPANIC OR LATINO AND RACE		
SEX AND AGE			Total population.....	6,373	100.0
Male.....	3,693	57.9	Hispanic or Latino (of any race).....	437	6.9
Female.....	2,680	42.1	Mexican.....	16	0.3
Under 5 years.....	379	5.9	Puerto Rican.....	281	4.4
5 to 9 years.....	397	6.2	Cuban.....	5	0.1
10 to 14 years.....	410	6.4	Other Hispanic or Latino.....	135	2.1
15 to 19 years.....	309	4.8	Not Hispanic or Latino.....	5,936	93.1
20 to 24 years.....	373	5.9	White alone.....	5,251	82.4
25 to 34 years.....	1,097	17.2	RELATIONSHIP		
35 to 44 years.....	1,400	22.0	Total population.....	6,373	100.0
45 to 54 years.....	944	14.8	In households.....	5,276	82.8
55 to 59 years.....	282	4.4	Householder.....	2,067	32.4
60 to 64 years.....	196	3.1	Spouse.....	1,161	18.2
65 to 74 years.....	336	5.3	Child.....	1,644	25.8
75 to 84 years.....	201	3.2	Own child under 18 years.....	1,304	20.5
85 years and over.....	49	0.8	Other relatives.....	170	2.7
Median age (years).....	36.6	(X)	Under 18 years.....	56	0.9
18 years and over.....	4,991	78.3	Nonrelatives.....	234	3.7
Male.....	3,009	47.2	Unmarried partner.....	136	2.1
Female.....	1,982	31.1	In group quarters.....	1,097	17.2
21 years and over.....	4,818	75.6	Institutionalized population.....	1,097	17.2
62 years and over.....	698	11.0	Noninstitutionalized population.....	-	-
65 years and over.....	586	9.2	HOUSEHOLD BY TYPE		
Male.....	252	4.0	Total households.....	2,067	100.0
Female.....	334	5.2	Family households (families).....	1,426	69.0
RACE			With own children under 18 years.....	706	34.2
One race.....	6,270	98.4	Married-couple family.....	1,161	56.2
White.....	5,347	83.9	With own children under 18 years.....	558	27.0
Black or African American.....	428	6.7	Female householder, no husband present.....	193	9.3
American Indian and Alaska Native.....	30	0.5	With own children under 18 years.....	114	5.5
Asian.....	134	2.1	Nonfamily households.....	641	31.0
Asian Indian.....	2	-	Householder living alone.....	524	25.4
Chinese.....	11	0.2	Householder 65 years and over.....	180	8.7
Filipino.....	19	0.3	Households with individuals under 18 years.....	748	36.2
Japanese.....	16	0.3	Households with individuals 65 years and over.....	427	20.7
Korean.....	39	0.6	Average household size.....	2.55	(X)
Vietnamese.....	16	0.3	Average family size.....	3.09	(X)
Other Asian ¹	31	0.5	HOUSING OCCUPANCY		
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander.....	5	0.1	Total housing units.....	2,156	100.0
Native Hawaiian.....	1	-	Occupied housing units.....	2,067	95.9
Guamanian or Chamorro.....	2	-	Vacant housing units.....	89	4.1
Samoan.....	-	-	For seasonal, recreational, or		
Other Pacific Islander ²	2	-	occasional use.....	16	0.7
Some other race.....	326	5.1	Homeowner vacancy rate (percent).....	0.6	(X)
Two or more races.....	103	1.6	Rental vacancy rate (percent).....	2.7	(X)
Race alone or in combination with one			HOUSING TENURE		
or more other races: ³			Occupied housing units.....	2,067	100.0
White.....	5,434	85.3	Owner-occupied housing units.....	1,457	70.5
Black or African American.....	460	7.2	Renter-occupied housing units.....	610	29.5
American Indian and Alaska Native.....	52	0.8	Average household size of owner-occupied units.....	2.77	(X)
Asian.....	174	2.7	Average household size of renter-occupied units.....	2.03	(X)
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander.....	8	0.1			
Some other race.....	357	5.6			

- Represents zero or rounds to zero. (X) Not applicable.

¹ Other Asian alone, or two or more Asian categories.

² Other Pacific Islander alone, or two or more Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander categories.

³ In combination with one or more of the other races listed. The six numbers may add to more than the total population and the six percentages may add to more than 100 percent because individuals may report more than one race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000.



HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

Home Sales (Banker & Tradesman) -

[Town Stats - Free market Statistics](#)

Subsidized Housing Units (DHCD 1998)

[DHCD Subsidized Housing Inventory](#)

Subsidized Housing Units: The number of housing units which count toward the municipality's 10% goal for low- and moderate-income housing. It includes both subsidized affordable units and market rate units in certain eligible subsidized developments.

Public Housing Units (DHCD 1999)

Conventional State: 0

Conventional Federal: 0

Rental Assistance(DHCD 1999)

State (MRVP: 0

Federal (Section 8): 0



TRANSPORTATION

TRANSPORTATION AND ACCESS

The principal highway in northern Worcester county is State Route 2, which runs across northern Massachusetts. State Route 140 and Interstate 190 connect the region to Worcester. The Springfield Terminal Railway line (the former Boston and Maine Railroad) parallels Route 2 and provides access to the network of intermodal facilities serving central and eastern Massachusetts.

Major Highways

Principal highways are State Routes 2A and 225. State Route 2 running E-W across northern Massachusetts passes just south of the town border.

Rail

Commuter rail service is available to North Station, Boston. Travel time 71-79 minutes; 60 MBTA parking spaces available. Freight rail service is available from the Springfield Terminal Railway. Contact number: (978) 663-1073

Bus

Shirley is a member of the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MRTA) but does not receive services.

Other

The Shirley Airport, a privately owned public service facility located 1 mi. SW of town, has a 3,250'x 55' asphalt runway with a copter approach.



CULTURE AND RECREATION

LIBRARIES

[Board of Library Commissioners On-line Library Catalog](#)

MUSEUMS

(American Association of Museums)

None

RECREATION

[Telephone Numbers for Public Information](#)

Recreational Facilities (Recreational sites and activities)

[Department of Environmental Management Recreation Section](#)



MISCELLANEOUS

HEALTH FACILITIES

(Dept. of Public Health 1992)

Hospitals

None

Long Term Care

None

Hospices

None

Rest Homes

None

UTILITIES

[Telephone Numbers for Public Utilities](#)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Department of Housing and Community Development would like to thank the many government agencies noted as having provided information for the community profiles. In addition to these agencies, the Regional Transit Authorities assisted with the transportation component of the profiles. We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of many city and town officials, which enabled us to include information obtainable only at the local level. DHCD would also like to thank the following individuals for providing special help: Leslie A. Kirwan, Deputy Commissioner, Division of Local Services, Department of Revenue; Richard Shibley, Deputy Secretary of State; Bob Beattie of the Department of Public Health; Charles W. Clifford from the Martha's Vineyard Commission; Dennis Coffey of the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction; Donna Fletcher and Christian Jacqz of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs; James Griffin from the MBTA; Karen Loh from Banker & Tradesman; Todd Maio from the Department of Welfare; Geoffrey Morton from the Election Division of the Secretary of State's Office; Stephen R. Muench of the Massachusetts Aeronautics Commission; Rol Murrow of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association; Mary Ann Neary and Emmanuelle Fletcher, reference librarians at the State House Library; Jeff Nellhaus from the Department of Education; and George Sanborn, reference librarian at the State Transportation Library.

NOTE: The COMMUNITY PROFILE draws information from a diversity of sources. The main source of information is listed under each section. In some instances comments submitted by the municipality were incorporated to correct and/or enhance the information obtained from the main source. However, no changes were made to those data bases which must be consistent throughout the state. DHCD has made efforts to ensure the accuracy of all data in the COMMUNITY PROFILES, but cannot take responsibility for any consequences arising from the use of the information contained in this document.